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while away an idle hour. But no! here is one of those relentless portraits drawn to make us all uncomfortable and uneasy. However much we may despise Maria, we yet wonder if any of her mean self-seeking, her shortsighted grasping after unearned eminence, lurks half hidden in us. This is no light reading, but a book to waken moral qualms, a pitiless portrait of a type, the natural outgrowth of modern conditions in which so many honors can be won by mere wealth and pretensions, that it is no wonder Maria learned to believe there was no citadel she could not storm. It is not an exalted or an ennobling book, but it is a very clever one, and one at least to make many people squirm uneasily. The mirror is held up unblushingly to our meaner selves.

Vital, alive, full of meat and matter, a little crude and uncooked, with just a faint trail of vulgarity over the whole, is this last volume by Gertrude Atherton.* The pictures of Munich are interesting and the setting is faithfully done. The "Styr" is fine, if unsympathetic, and the young Englishman who is the chief figure of the piece is just a little contemptible, despite his creator's evident fondness for him. It is interesting to note that she has drawn him with all the love and care and fidelity which the older novelists were wont to lavish on the young heroine. Women have been as tenderly drawn by men, but it would be difficult to find a parallel of a young man as lovingly drawn by a woman. To be sure, George Eliot lavished infinite thought and pains upon *Deronda*, but, after all, it was an *idea* she was drawing, not a man. The study of passion in all its phases is cleverly, if not nobly, worked up, and the book is a full and conscientious piece of work. Such fault as one would find with it would concern only a certain coarseness of fibre, a *grobheit* of texture which is perhaps inevitable and belongs of very nature to such a book.

If "Mr. Polly"† is offered as a pendant to "Ann Veronica" he is not good enough for the place. That rebellious daughter had at least a robust vitality and, as one critic mentioned, she meant well. But he is dyspeptic, low-spirited and means noth-

* "The Tower of Ivory." By Gertrude Atherton. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910.

† "The History of Mr. Polly." By H. G. Wells. New York: Duffield & Co., 1910.

ing at all. The sad case of the small tradesman crowded into bankruptcy by the department stores lies at Mr. Wells's heart for good and sufficient reasons, doubtless, but it has not yet been written. Mr. Polly would have failed, more or less, anywhere, at any time, except perhaps on a Pacific island before the white man came. There seems small profit in being sorry for him over 318 pages. The tragedy of mean people of the stuff that classical comedy is cut from can indeed be written, but only by a man big enough to laugh at their meanness and pierce below it to squeeze his little piece of human nature (as a great critic once put it) until it grimaces or bleeds. Not the surface and sentiment, but essential humanity and cosmical irony, is wanted to write the history of our own times. "Tono-Bungay" had the virtue of setting down a period whole and complete as a picture of Degas or a novel of de Goncourt's, and it had the greater virtue of vibrating for a moment to the great current of contemporary life. But "Mr. Polly," when he has done whimpering, is become impossible and — which is worse — incredible.

This is a very different book from "The Inner Shrine" with its fashionable New York and American-French society. This one is full of the breath of the woods and the clear air that blows across lakes. It plays in the Adirondacks, the Argentine Republic and New York.

Some novels are studies of life made with deliberate intent "to warn, to comfort and command." They show up Life, contract its rhythm till we see causes begetting effects and effects working out again into new causes. There is another kind of novel more distantly related to life written to amuse us, to lead us into more fanciful paths when reality by its dulness and slowness threatens to bore us; and it is to this latter class that "The Wild Olive"* belongs.

Once again this author gives us a very brave and very able heroine. His women are so capable, so high-minded and gallant-hearted, that they incline to throw the men somewhat in the shade, and Miriam, the heroine, in this volume, proud of the savage taint in her blood, is no exception to the rule.

* "The Wild Olive." By the author of "The Inner Shrine." New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910.